DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 857 PS 012 032

AUTHOR Hamrin, Jeannie M.
TITLE Sociopolitical Attitudes Underlying Good Child Care.
PUB DATE Nov 80
NOTE 18p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (San Francisco, CA, November 21-24, 1980). Best copy available.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS After School Programs: *Childhood Needs: *Community Responsibility: *Day Care Centers: Educational Development: Educational Experiments: Educational Finance: Educational Innovation: Employed Parents: Foreign Countries: Legislation: *Policy: Preschool Education: *Public Support: Recreational Activities: Recreational Facilities: Schools: Social Attitudes: *Social History: Socialism
IDENTIFIERS Denmark: *Scandinavia: Sweden

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the social context for and the provision of child care services in Scandinavia. Particular emphasis is given to Denmark and Sweden. Occasionally, comparisons are made in the paper between Scandinavian countries and the United States, and differing attitudes toward the poor are pointed out. In the Scandinavian countries underlying sociopolitical attitudes as to what makes a good society are reflected in social legislation and policies affecting families. In the case of Denmark, these policies date as far back as 1888. Generally, a long history of providing family support coupled with early compulsory education and late industrialization has led to well defined policies, high standards and a wide range of services. Sweden is currently experimenting with centers for multi-age groups in which children may range in age from seven months to 12 years. Sweden also provides after-school or recreation/leisure centers for school-age children. Further, Sweden has more playgrounds per capita than any other country in the world. The adventure playground originated in Denmark. Danish law mandates that all towns with a population over 5,000 must provide a special children's library section. In contrast, the United States in 1979 was one of the few developed countries with no national policy for providing child care to those in need. (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED197857

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOCIOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES UNDERLYING GOOD CHILD CARE

Jeannie M. Hamrin, Ed.D.
University of Southern Maine

ABSTRACT

This paper is a summation of more than ten years of participation in child care programs in Scandinavia with particular emphasis on Denmark and Sweden. The underlying sociopolitical attitudes as to what makes a good society are reflected in social legislation and policies affecting families which date back to 1888. This long history of providing family support coupled with early compulsory education (1830's) and late industrialization (1870's) has led to well defined policies, high standards and a wide range of services.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jeannie M. Hamrin
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS012032

SOCIOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES UNDERLYING GOOD CHILD CARE

Jeannie M. Hamrin, Ed.D.
University of Southern Maine

-The care of human life and happiness ... is the first and only legitimate object of good government.

- Thomas Jefferson

Introduction

Because of my Scandinavian heritage and interest in child development, I wanted to study the Scandinavian alternative to the American social, and political system of delivering care and services to young children and their families. A year spent in Denmark in 1958 was my first adventure. I went for intellectual reasons, but the unexpected benefits were my personal growth and increased awareness of a larger world, which resulted in subsequent journeys to Scandinavia. In 1963 I married a Swede, lived in Sweden from 1963 to 1970, had a family, and experienced directly the Swedish family and child care system as a "consumer". For the past ten years, I have been a frequent visitor to all Scandinavian countries -- always looking at child care facilities. This past summer, I led a graduate level early childhood seminar which was efficiently organized by the Danish Institute. The seminar involved two weeks of lectures, seminars and visitations to various facilities. This paper is a summation of my total experiences with child care within Scandinavia, with the largest emphasis on my last two summers in Denmark and Sweden. All pictures of facilities are from 1979 and 1980.

The general background deals with Scandinavia as a whole. The subsequent sections cover Sweden and Denmark individually. Each section is a self-contained unit and may be read as such.

General Background

There are many common features among the Scandinavian countries. All had predominantly rural economies until the end of the last century when industrialization started. The mistakes made by other countries were thus avoided by this delayed industrialization. Furthermore, there are not many of the "old" industries left which are not longer needed in the 1980's. Thus, by our standards, Scandinavia's development into a modern industrial society has been rapid. However, it is argued that some of the social problems facing Scandinavia today have arisen because society has not had time to cope with these rapid changes.

All of the countries are governed by Social Democratic parties, or by parties similar in all but name. There is a remarkable degree of political consensus, given the multi-party system of each country. However, this is beginning to break down in the face of increased inflation, balance of payment problems and reliance on Middle East oil. Taxation is extremely high in order to pay for the high level of public spending in all areas of public concern. The rate is around 50% for an average income, and there is more than 20% sales tax (called MOMS) on everything including food; additional "luxury" taxes on soap, alcohol, tobacco, automobiles, roads, televisions, radios, dogs, and other "non-essential" items. In Sweden, for example, the non-working wife is taxed as a "luxury"; and the working wife's income is considered "marginal" on very high incomes, together with generous social and health benefits of all kinds and low unemployment, combine to make the Scandinavian countries much more socially uniform than ours.

It is apparent that their social legislation and policies reflect the attitudes and feelings towards less fortunate members of their society. Since the United States was largely founded by those seeking to escape state domination, Americans tend to be wary of state legislation on social issues.

Politically, the United States operates on the "conflict model", in which it is not only correct but necessary, for different groups to fight for their rights at the expense of others. The Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, have practiced a "harmony model" for years. They firmly believe that it is not possible to create a good living environment for children without creating a "good" society for all. The basis of their "good" society must be the right of all to work, and even distribution of prosperity, production based upon the needs of the many, and a just distribution of influence. For this reason, reforms aimed at improving the living conditions of children were not directed only towards children, but towards a total remolding of society. Whereas we spend much time in the United States debating whether the government should initiate programs and/or regulate those extant programs on behalf of children, the Scandinavians accept and believe that they should and must.

More women in Scandinavia go out to work than in the United States. In 1967, 30% of all women in Sweden with children under three, had at least a part-time job, and in 1977 this had risen to more than 60%. This has led to a demand for pre-school and after-school facilities, a demand which the government immediately recognized as its responsibility. The issue has not been, as it is here, whether the state should provide for children of working parents, but rather how quickly can places be provided, and increasingly, what is the best form of care?

In addition to the traditional day care centers and after-school centers, very generous help is given to working parents who have young children. For example in Sweden, either parent may stay at home until the child is one year old. During that year, they will receive 90% of their normal income from the state. After the first year, either parent can elect to work for only six hours a day until the child is eight years old. This shortening of the

working day recognized the fact that travel time is often long, and parents can hardly be said to have a reasonable chance of giving their child(ren) enough time on ordinary weekdays. It recognized the fact that parents with difficult working conditions, such as shift work, have a particular need for shorter working hours. In addition, either parent can stay at home to look after a sick child for up to sixty days a year and receive full social insurance benefits.

Compulsory education in Scandinavia begins at age seven and continues until age sixteen. After that, a large number go for at least another three years, either in vocational training or in studies preparing them for university or further education. In Denmark and Sweden particularly, an increasing number of schools offer a voluntary year for children at age six, which is similar to our kindergartens. The school day for all is from eight to one or two, which means at least a three-hour gap, even with a shortened working day for some children before their mothers return from work. The in-school hours are much more narrowly focused on academic areas than in the United States. This stems from the time when compulsory education began and Scandinavia was predominantly rural, and children needed to return home to help on the farms. Denmark has had compulsory education since 1814* and did not become industrialized until the 1900's. This meant that people were generally literate before moving into more urban settings, whereas, the reverse was true in the United States. Sweden has had compulsory education since 1842. Sweden's development into a prosperous society has only taken place in the last fifty years. It is doubtful whether any other country in the world has been so totally organized, socialized, mechanized and modernized as Sweden. As recently as the 1930's, large sections of Sweden were in extreme need. Children were starving and mortality was high,

---

* The first compulsory elementary education law in the United States was passed by Massachusetts in 1852. By 1900, some thirty states had passed similar laws.

especially in the lower social-economic groups. Supervision of children was scarce as both parents were compelled to work in the fields. A change took place in the 1930's when it was observed that "the fault lies in society's organization of production and distribution which cannot keep pace with technical development. Small adjustments in economic distribution, such as fertility premiums and tax relief for large families, give only a short-term illusion of improvement. If we want to achieve something more, it will probably be necessary to reform the whole society, more or less, from top to bottom."* This is, in fact, what the Swedes have done, as is the case with the other Scandinavian countries.

However, the Scandinavian countries are finding that their generous welfare states have not protected them from the social problems found in the United States and other western countries. Alcoholism and drug abuse among young people is increasing rapidly, as is juvenile crime. Among adults, the rate of divorce is rapidly growing, as well as the number of adults seeking help with emotional or psychiatric problems. The recent economic recession has meant that unemployment, especially among the young, has begun to become a problem. This has brought about the debate about lengthening compulsory education. As you can see, there are imperfections. Yet, the Scandinavian aim to achieve 'the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people' is a worthy objective. The effort has been massive, and it continues today.

* Gunnar & Alva Myrdal, Crisis in the Population Question, 1934.

Sweden

- All those things which come out of the American pioneering heart are institutionalized in Sweden.

  - U. S. Diplomat

- Why is the pretty girl smiling? She lives in a country where everybody has a job and enough to eat, where crime is practically non-existent, where there are no slums or ghettos, and there hasn't been a war for 150 years.

  - SAS Advertisement

Sweden has always prided itself on having progressive social policies, especially toward children. For example, the most recent act gives children access to an ombudsman as well as the right to divorce their parents. There is also a law that prohibits any form of parental violence towards children, including spanking. Efforts over the last 70 years on behalf of families and children have resulted in considerable assistance, financial and otherwise, by the state.

A list of the important social reforms affecting children follows:

1909	4-year intermediate school
1914	State unemployment assistance
1917	Provisions for children born out-of-wedlock
1917	Law on Adoption
1919	Law restricting working hours (8-hour day)
1924	Child Welfare Act: appointment of child welfare committees
1930	Order-in-Council prohibiting the use of minors for certain dangerous tasks
1931	Maternity assistance (for the uninsured)
1936	7-year compulsory school
1937	Special children's allowances for children of widows and invalids and for orphans
1937	Improved maternity ward services
1937	Preventive mother and child care; establishment of mother and child care clinics
1937	Free preventive medicine for mothers and children
1937	Law prohibiting dismissal of women who marry or become engaged

1943	State subsidies for day-nurseries, play-schools and after-school centers
1945	Dismissal of women on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth prohibited
1946	Introduction of free school meals
1947	Law on children's allowances
1948	Family housing allowances
1950	Decision in principle to introduce the 9-year compulsory comprehensive school
1955	Maternity insurance and free delivery
1962	The compulsory comprehensive school introduced
1964	Technical schools introduced, girls' seminaries and practical elementary schools abolished
1964	Study grant system expanded
1968	Gymnasial or pre-university schools, vocational training schools and technical schools merged to form the integrated upper-secondary school
1969	Housing allowances for families with children
1973	Parenthood insurance - paternity leave
1973	Improved unemployment insurance
1973	Public pre-school
1975	Shorter working hours for parents of small children
1978	Parental Insurance -- increase in the number of days leave of absence for the care of sick children Increased maternity and/or paternity leave Increased leave of absence during latter period of pregnancy for women doing physically hard labor
1978	Statute prohibiting any form of parental violence
1979	Children have the right to divorce their parents

These reforms were basically aimed at improving the living conditions for children, but have created a better society for all.

Swedish society has undergone great changes in the past few decades. Mothers of small children have entered the labor market in great force sharing economic responsibility with their husbands. In 1977, more than 60% of all mothers of children under three years were employed. This has brought about the demand for child/family support.

Sweden has a total of about 760,000 children of pre-school age. There are long waiting lists for municipal child care, especially for children under three. In Stockholm alone, there are 533 day care centers serving 19,000 children (more than 50% of the children between the ages of six months

and six years). In Sweden as a whole, 41% of children under seven are served by a licensed day care center, private nursery or family day care setting. The day care centers are specially designed and equipped for children and similar to others found throughout Scandinavia.

One idea being experimented with in Swedish centers is the integrated or multi-age groups. In 1979, I visited an integrated center in Enebyberg, a suburb of Stockholm. This center was composed of four groups of 15 children each, ranging in ages from seven months to twelve years. So far the results of these experiments have been highly encouraging. The children have benefitted from more varied and stimulating surroundings. Increased cooperation and consideration between group members seems to be a particular advantage. Another advantage is that the children do not have to change groups and adult companions several times during their pre-school years and siblings may also stay together in the same group. There are also advantages to the family and staff as well, such as

As well as the day care centers, there are after-school or recreation/leisure centers for school age children. These centers have a wide variety of activities such as weaving, sewing, cooking, woodwork, pottery, small engine work, sports, bicycle repair, and even animal care. There are also other facilities such as playgrounds, drop-in centers for mothers who wish to shop or have their hair done and part-time day care centers. A special feature for children often found in banks, restaurants, and other areas where children might have to wait are "lego tables" or special play tables. Sweden has more playgrounds per capita than any other country in the world.

Denmark

- The king reigns, but the people rule.

- Scandinavian saying

I spent two weeks during the summer of 1980 visiting all types of

facilities which deal with young children. These include schools, day care centers, hospitals, social welfare agencies, libraries, Ministries of Education, Social Welfare and Cultural Affairs, and a children's theater. Denmark, like Sweden, is a highly developed welfare state. Their ideas about social policy and equality and justice are perhaps the oldest in the world. A paraphrased translation of the Jutland Law of 1241 states that "... if no law, he who could own most, would grab most. This is a most remarkable law which recognized the needs of many and a just distribution of wealth. In more recent history is the Constitution of 1849 which made it society's duty to help the poor. Because Denmark was a rural society which had compulsory education since 1814, the lower class never became so downtrodden as has been the case in the United States. Also the aim of their social legislation has always been preventive -- to keep the needs from becoming too great. Some of the laws passed very early were:

1888 State would pay alimony for a child if the father didn't -- the principle being the child should not suffer because of parent
1891 Old Age Assistance
1892 Sickness Insurance
Financial assistance
1898 Accidents at work
1907 Unemployment
1920 Disablement
1933 Public Assistance Act, first major reform
1937 Health Visitor Act
1939 Maternity Aid Act
1945 Post natal Care
1960 Rehabilitation Act
1964 Children's libraries
1967 Child and Family Analysis -- children are the next generation so all have a responsibility to give them a good start
1976 Social Assistance Act -- extremely liberal and futuristic act

The principles behind this 1976 reform are:

1. prevention through early intervention;
2. a total view of the problem and not just a fragmentary solution;
3. no fixed amount to be awarded, but the state will provide what is necessary in each individual case; and
4. a single entry point into the system often referred to as a huge "social supermarket".

These are just a few of the laws which reflect the sociopolitical attitudes of the Danish society towards its inhabitants.

As is Sweden, there is a well built system of day care, but also a recognized need for more day care places. Arhus, a city of 275,000 has 302 institutions with a total of 16,000 places. In addition, there are 3,800 infants up to two years being served in private homes, 7,700 public pre-school places and 41 leisure centers for children from seven to fourteen-years-old serving 2,100 children, and approximately 2,000 additional places in specialized institutions. About 40% of the under two-year-old population, 55% of the three to six-year-olds, and 10% of the seven to ten-year-olds are served by the municipality at little or no cost to the family. This is clearly not enough, as there are approximately 3,000 children on waiting lists. It is estimated by the municipality that 85 new institutions must be built over the next five years to meet the existing need. I visited an integrated day care center called Bodøgarden in Arhus. This center houses 240 children ranging in age from seven months up to sixteen years, and which was open from 6:30 A.M. until 11:00 P.M.

The adventure playground originated in Denmark and almost every institution which has some connection with children has an outdoor space with different types of structures for children to play on. All of the newer housing developments have their own playgrounds, community centers, "blind" child-safe streets, special bciycling paths away from traffic and other

child-oriented features. Many such centers have a full-time recreation teacher in their employ.

The importance of play in hospitals for children is fully accepted and recognized. For instance, the children's ward (12 beds) in Randers had a very well-equipped play area with two trained pre-school teachers working there. A qualified school teacher is also employed to aid children with their lessons.

In Arhus, I visited a library with a wonderful children's section. There were the usual books, records, and tapes as found in all libraries, but also a special room for dramatic play complete with puppets, art materials, dress-up clothes, a stage and a specially trained librarian. The 1964 Revision of the Public Library Law establishes that all local governments of towns with a population over 5,000, must provide a special children's library section.

As in all Scandinavia, schooling starts at age seven and is compulsory until age sixteen. It is a comprehensive education system without tracking. Teachers are supposed to stay with the same class from the age of seven until sixteen, although this does not always happen because of changes in staff. However, they usually stay with the same class for at least three or four years. I visited a school -- Grønlukkeskolan -- which had an organized assembly once a month for the whole school at which time the younger children could complain about the behavior of the older ones. This school also tried to discourage too much competitiveness in games by not having fixed teams within the school, but altering team composition so that children who were less good at games did not feel like failures. A set curriculum is provided by the Ministry of Education, although teachers are given a lot of freedom in teaching their subjects. A recent innovation for children ages fourteen and fifteen who are not likely to continue their schooling after sixteen, and are presently not benefitting from their last two years in school, is the

so-called "youth school". Here they are provided with a mixture of training and practical work; for instance, some municipalities have bought farms and hold school there.

Norway, Finland and Iceland

These three countries are indeed true "scale models" of Sweden and Denmark and mirror the familiar welfare state with its generous support for families and children in the form of day care centers, recreation and leisure centers and other services. Because I have less experience and the services and policies are essentially the same as in other countries, I have chosen not to elaborate on their systems.

Conclusion

In general, I have been very impressed with what I have seen in Scandinavia over the past two decades. There has been a genuine concern to meet the needs of children and families which is reflected in the very wide range of services and high standards of child care provided. All countries have been quick to respond to new social problems as they have arisen, and all were prepared to experiment with different ways of tackling existing problems. They have all taken the increase in the numbers of women who work seriously and have decided that society should make provision for their children, rather than leaving it to the parents. All the centers I visited were impressive, and standards were high. Provisions for older school-age children were also good, and although not adequate to meet the need, were much more extensive than is the case in the United States. There was always a wide range of activities available -- both indoor and outdoor -- under the supervision of specially trained staff.

Services for children under seven are much more integrated than in the United States. There is a well-defined policy which is being imple-

mented, and this is reflected in the preparation of students entering this line of work, as well as a variety of other measures being implemented to assist families with young children.

The extremely high level of public spending in Scandinavia has helped to create much more equal and just societies than ours. However, it is apparent that social problems can not all be solved simply by more public spending. There are many other forces in society that affect the lives of children and families. For instance, there must first be a commitment to equal rights for women and a recognition of their right to work. At the same time, there must be recognition of the importance of fathering, reductions in the working week for both parents so more genuine sharing in the upbringing of children can take place.

To bring this about, the United States must resolve its ambivalence about mothers who work. We must look at the economic reality -- that most women can't afford not to work, that most women believe a weekly paycheck better serves family interests than full-time motherhood. The failure of our society as a whole, and politicians in particular, is reflected by our failure to articulate any kind of national day care policy to support families.

Already back in 1930, at a White House Conference, the following goals were part of the Children's Charter:

> For every child - a community which recognizes and plans for children's needs.
> For every child - a community which makes provisions for children's cultural, educational, and social needs.

And yet in 1979, the White House Conference on Families had to be canceled because it was too "controversial" when the experts revealed that fewer than seven percent of Americans are now living in the kind of family arrangement to which politicians are always paying lip service -- Daddy, the breadwinner, Mommy, the housewife, two children plus dog and cat

(New York Times Magazine, Nov. 18, '79). As an agenda for the 80's, we must accept - rather than deny - the fact that ninety-three percent of American families fit "non-traditional" patterns. This brings change in the roles and relationships of men, women, and children. We must, therefore, seek new responses to these conditions that support the non-traditional family. And yet the United States is one of the few "advanced" nations with no national policy to provide child care for those who need it. (Young Children, May 1979)

Until the United States recognized the economic realities as well as its responsibility for equal rights for all including women and children, then we will still be posing the question:

<u>And where do the children play?</u>

References:

Engbert, A. "Early Childhood and Pre-school Education" Det danske Selskab, 1979.

Finn, M. "Children: What are the priorities?" Philanthropy Monthly, Jan. 1979.

Friedan, B. "Feminism Takes A New Turn" The New York Times Magazine, Nov. 18, 1979.

Holbert, B. S. "The Child in Society" Det danske Selskab, 1979.

Pence, A. R. "Child Care in Two Developing Countries: Kenya and the United States" Young Children, Vol. 34, No. 4, May 1979.

Sjoblom, K. Atta spadbarn borjar pa daghem (Eight Infants Begin Day Care) Stockholm: Wahlstrom and Widstrand, 1977.

Socialstyrelsen, Sma barn i daghem (Ministry of Social Welfare, Young Children in Day Care) Uddevalla, Liberforlag, 1979.

Wittorp, B. & Lind, K. "Children's Policy in Sweden", Current Sweden, No. 115, May 1976.

Daghem (Day Care), Familjestodsudredningen (Family Aid Commission) Uddevalla: Bohus-laningens AB, 1978.

Review of the Social Assistance Act, Nov. 1979
(Handout from lecture by Britta Lissner, 6/23/80)
Arhus, Denmark.

"Who's Minding the Kids?" Boston Sunday Globe Editorial, May 11, 1980.

Where do the Children Play?

Well, I think it's fine building jumbo planes
Taking a ride on a cosmic train
Switch on summer from SCAT machine
Get what you want to if you want
'Cause you can get anything
I know we've come a long way
We're changing day to day - but tell me
Where do the children play?

Well, you roll on roads over fresh green grass
For your lorry loads pumping petro gas
And you make them long and you make them tough
But they just go on and on and it seems that you can't get off
I know we've come a long way
We're changing day to day - but tell me
Where do the children play?

Well, you crack the sky scrapers fill the air
But will you keep on building higher till there's no more room up there?
Will you make us laugh? Will you make us cry?
Will you tell us when to live?
Will you tell us when to die?
I know we've come a long way
We're changing day to day - but tell me
Where do the children play??

Cat Stevens
"Tea for the Tillerman"